

Department of Defense Acquisition Reform Week, March 17-21, 1997

Sustaining the Momentum While Moving Full Speed Ahead

DR. JOSEPH FERRARA

The Secretary of Defense declared March 17-21, 1997, as Acquisition Reform Week. The theme of AR Week was "Sustaining the Momentum While Moving Full Speed Ahead." The Department needs to sustain the momentum on all the reform efforts initiated since 1993, while moving forward to tackle new challenges to reinventing government. The secretary and other Department leaders want to show their continued commitment to acquisition reform.

Teamwork

One major focus of AR Week was on using teamwork as a catalyst to make AR initiatives the norm. As Vice presi-

dent Gore said in his videotaped AR Week Message to the Department, "Teamwork is at the heart of successful reinvention."

During AR Week, the entire defense acquisition community—DoD acquisition workers, military users, auditors, financial analysts, legal counsel, and the defense industry—Joined together in teams, discussed the state of acquisition reform, and focused on how to apply acquisition reform initiatives in their everyday work. Hundreds of thousands of people were involved, everybody from the Secretary of Defense to the GS-9 at Grand Forks Air Force Base who just won an award for streamlining the contracting

process. To ensure maximum communication potential, DoD leaders also set up electronic "chat rooms" on the Internet to conduct online discussions with the acquisition community (see p. 40 of this issue, "Kaminski Conducts Acquisition Reform Week Online Chat Sessions").

Where Are We?

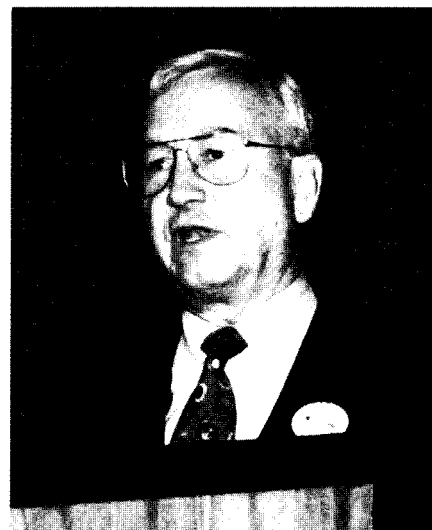
As the Department observed Acquisition Reform Week, several themes emerged:

- The acquisition process is changing from a rules-driven bureaucratic system to an environment that encourages the application of commonsense business practices.

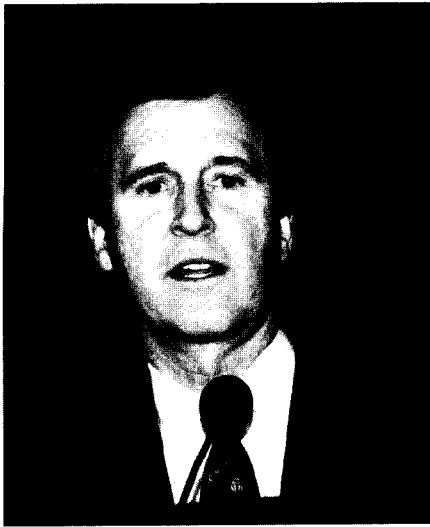
"We have set aside this whole week to pull together government and industry teams throughout our defense acquisition system to look at the way we are doing business now, and to explore how we might improve the way we do business in the future, looking at fundamental approaches to doing this, but doing it with teamwork. Our success in pulling together and operating as a team with open communications and no surprises will in large part be the overall key to our success."

— Dr. Paul G. Kaminski

Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology)



Ferrara is the Executive Secretary to the Board and Executive Committee, Civilian Career Development Program. He is a member of the OUSD(A&T) API staff.



"We have to commit more time and more resources for training in order to build a very solid cadre of people who know and understand the new systems we're building."

— William S. Cohen
Secretary of Defense

- We have the *technology* to streamline, and we must exploit this technology to move reinvention efforts into the 21st Century.
 - While streamlining is a key objective, government leaders will still continue to play the important and legitimate role of program oversight.
 - The Department is rightsizing the acquisition workforce and expanding training and education to ensure a smarter workforce.
- Maintaining high levels of readiness in the acquisition system translates into high levels of readiness for the warfighter.
- Reform is a continuous process of improvement.

The first is to sustain the momentum and ensure that ongoing reform initiatives are fully implemented. Since 1993, DoD has made substantial progress in several key areas, including the enactment of landmark acquisition reform legislation and a dramatic reduction in the regulatory burden associated with government acquisition. The second key effort is to move forward to tackle new challenges. These new challenges include:

- Enhancing the stability of defense acquisition programs to reduce schedule slippage and cost growth.
- Applying reform innovations to service contracting, contracting for services consumes almost 50 cents of every defense contract dollar.
- Expanding electronic commerce to prepare the acquisition community

for the rapid pace of a global economy in an information age.

- Expanding education and training to ensure that DoD's acquisition professionals stay on the cutting edge of the latest in best business practices.

Our Defense Acquisition Executive summarized the spirit and intent of Acquisition Reform week with a simple statement:

"In this world, you're either moving ahead or you're falling behind. We can't stop where we are and rest our laurels."

— Dr. Paul G. Kaminski
Under Secretary of Defense
(Acquisition & Technology)
March 17, 1997

We're At a Critical Juncture

Acquisition Reform is at a Critical juncture; two key efforts must be pursued.

"As the Department's representative of the military user, I want to tell you why I believe acquisition reform is so absolutely critical to us—that reason is, quite simply, supporting the men and women in uniform who are doing the tough jobs around the world the Secretary of Defense has tasked them to do."

— Gen. Joseph Ralston
Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

